



CHICOPEE CITY COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE

APPROVED 10-21-2021

MEMBERS

Shane Brooks, Chairman
Frank Laflamme, Vice Chairman
Fred Krampits
Gary Labrie
James Tillotson
Jerry Roy
Robert J. Zygarowski

MINUTES
September 8, 2021

The following are the minutes of a public hearing held Thursday, September 8, 2021 at 6:00 PM in the City Council Auditorium 3rd Floor/zoom, City Hall, 17 Springfield Street, Chicopee, MA 01013.

Members Present

Brooks, Laflamme, Krampits, Labrie, Tillotson, Roy, Zygarowski,

Also Present

Kevin Corridan (Associate City Solicitor), Councilor Dobosz,
Councilor Courchesne, Councilor Walczak, Councilor Balakier

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

In compliance with the Open Meeting Law the Chairman asked if anyone in the audience was recording the meeting.

ITEM #1

BE IT ORDERED THAT the Finance committee meet to discuss COVID relief money.

Councilor Walczak stated he submitted a couple of requests, one for road work and sewer separation. He stated he has forty streets in Fairview to be done. Two streets are in design. He proposes the sewer separation and road construction In Fairview.

Councilor Balakier stated that he spoke with the Treasurer and fourteen million we have right now and it's for the first phase. He stated we need to invest in the Water Sewer infrastructure. We need to replace the pumps, they have been working since 1976. He stated that we were talking about broadband with the Chicopee Electric Light. He stated that they also discussed taking care of some essential workers. He stated that they have to fit into seven categories. We are still looking for

further input. He stated that the Waste Water Treatment plant is an expensive proposition but it will benefit the whole city.

Councilor Tillotson stated that the Auditor and the Treasurer needed to do something to let the Government know where we're going to use the money. He stated that the easiest one to get started with was the sewer and water.

Councilor Laflamme stated that the water meter change over system is going to affect a lot of elderly people. He proposes putting money toward the electronic water meter system.

Councilor Labrie asked if we actually have the fourteen million dollars to start the work.

Councilor Balakier stated yes we have the money in an account.

Councilor Labrie agrees to spend the money on the Waste Water Treatment and Sewer Separation. He stated that any money we can get to offset any future burden on our homeowners or residents would be great. He stated that some money should be given to the essential workers that had to work through this covid.

Councilor Krampits stated that he proposes infrastructure, broadband and essential workers. He stated that splitting it up so that it will be effective.

Councilor Dobosz stated broadband is on the way to be completed. He does support the Waste Water and Sewer Separation. He stated if we can spend money on the water meters he wants to encourage this committee to consider recommending that to the Mayor. He stated that two thirds of all the water meters in the city are so bad that the Water Department is guessing on your bill. People are getting huge water bills every billing cycle.

Councilor Courchesne stated he agrees with the water meters unfortunately the money can't be used for projects already in progress. He stated that he has a hard time with an essential worker sitting at home on zoom as supposed to a Firefighter going into people's home exposing their selves and their families to the dangers of the virus and putting their selves in harm's way. He stated that he would like to see some of the really bad roads paved. He stated he would like to see a little bit invested in broadband in some of the infrastructure.

Councilor Tillotson stated that the Mayors are getting together across the county to decide what's essential and will meet the criteria of the Government.

Motion to place on file and continue to utilized Councilors Tillotson and Balkier representation on the ARPA committee to convey the suggestions of the council with the committee In addition all Councilors are encouraged to contact the Mayor's office directly with their respective ideas

Councilor Laflamme motion to approve – Councilor Tillotson 2nd the motion – motion passed

Committee vote 6 – 0 favorable

Councilor Laflamme motion to take Item #2 out of order – Councilor Brooks 2nd the motion – motion Passed

ITEM #2

BE IT ORDERED THAT the City Council along with the Mayor will pursue the creation of a community resource center to confront the issues of chronic homelessness, addiction and food insecurity experienced by Chicopee residents.

Councilor Brooks stated that we want to confront some of the chronic homelessness and lack of movement with any progress in the downtown with respect to business development and

addressing some of the needs that aren't able to be met with other social service agencies. He stated that the community resource center will support marginalized members of the community and allow free access to sanitary facilities for; bathing and laundry services. These strategies will deter homelessness and remove barriers that would prevent affordable health care. He stated that national data shows twenty percent of homeless individuals are chronically homeless and they are the highest users of public service including mental health, emergency rooms and Police services. The price of criminal justice system in a community like Chicopee is very costly. He stated that the poverty rate in Chicopee in 2020 was sixteen point four percent affecting almost ten thousand residents. He stated that the homelessness in Chicopee is five percent or twenty five hundred individuals and the majority of those individuals are residing in the downtown area. He stated that we have gotten complaints about the underpass on three ninety one with the homeless encampment there.

Councilor Brooks stated that the cities federal covid recover money totals roughly thirty eight million dollars. The federal regulations allows for the creation of community based health centers offering a variety of services and the funding can be used specifically for public health expenditures and to address the negative impacts related to homelessness, food and insecurity caused by this public emergency. He stated that there may be additional qualifying events by this allows us to address some of the needs that are occurring in the downtown. He stated he spoke to the Police Chief and the Mayor and in 2019 and 2021 the cost of Police response in the downtown is roughly two hundred thousand dollars a year which includes Police and ambulance. He stated that if this Community Health Center can help curb half of the thousand calls that the downtown area receives every year it would almost pay for itself. He stated that the Center is shy of a half a million dollars to operate every year, we wouldn't have to dip into the cities operating budget until the fourth year.

Councilor Brooks stated we have the opportunity to use the vacant library building located at 31 Center Street, it has the capacity to allow for laundry and sanitary facility.

Councilor Brooks stated that he spoke to Scott Chapdelaine Director of Facilities for the City of Chicopee and the one time retrofitting and co-compliant cost are roughly a half a million dollars and we would have to install an exterior stair lift for five thousand dollars. There is an alternative sight that is located at 148-152 Center Street. Danny Hanoush controls that property and he's asking sixteen dollars per square foot at a triple net lease is roughly fifty six thousand dollars plus any utilities. That current facility is vacant and has sanitary capacity. He asked him if he would consider lowering the price to be more competitive with the market and he indicated that if he's able to partner with the city he would. He stated that according to the US National Medicine and National Institutes of Health; providing permanent support of housing and healthcare saves the taxpayers money not only in healthcare cost, it reduces the stressors' on emergency rooms and decreases hospitalizations by sixty one percent.

Councilor Brooks stated that reoccurring staff related expenses are fairly minimal. He stated you need a qualified clinical director between one hundred and ten to one hundred and twenty thousand dollars annually, an RN, an Outreach Coordinator and a fulltime Administrator which is around forty thousand dollars. Facilities cost and utilities upkeep in consulting with Scott Chapdelaine is roughly one hundred and fifty five thousand per year and on the Library eighty thousand. He stated that the total operational yearly cost is around five hundred thousand. He stated that on a fiscal year twenty two budget of two hundred fourteen million operational cost of the community based health care center is representative less than one fourth of one percent of our total operating budget. He stated that the cost and the covid money there is no impact to the rate payers for the first four years. He stated engaging people with appropriate medication particularly our elderly and those who don't understand the medications that are prescribed to them, there is

pill box management and educational services related to medications. He stated education related to covid-19 and the CDC guidelines. He stated there are resources to food bank, unemployment guidance and assistance to housing and section 8 housing. He stated one of the most important programs it helps keep households in stable situations when facing evictions. He stated they help with job assistance and getting ready for the workforce, interviews and resumes, diploma assistance, after school programs and tutoring.

Councilor Brooks stated that the homeless living on the streets has an adverse effect to the downtown businesses. We'd like to grow businesses and make people feel safe downtown. He stated that access to healthcare improves and strengthens business growth.

Councilor Courchesne stated do you think a Mobil service of needle exchange outreach and getting to the people where they are and letting them know of the services downtown.

Councilor Brooks stated that there would be opportunities to partner with qualified agencies to provide those ancillary benefits. He stated lets create the in-house talent to do it ourselves. There are no financial barriers and this is our opportunity to try.

Councilor Laflamme stated he like the concept of it all and it's a lot to digest. He stated to try a rental bases for three years under the Covid plan and see how it goes. He stated it is a lot of money.

Councilor Brooks stated that he thinks this entity can work in concert with the CP3 Program.

Councilor Laflamme asked who will be responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the facility.

Councilor Brooks stated he spoke to Scott Chapdelaine and he thought they could utilize their current staffing to do that.

Councilor Laflamme stated to post this on channel five to give a presentation because this will be on the taxpayers of the City of Chicopee. He stated it's a good concept but it's a lot of money. He stated we need communication throughout the city.

Councilor Roy stated he was involved with the soup kitchen for many years. He stated that housing is a separate issue that will cost more. He stated that he would like to have a survey with the business owners to see how they would feel about having this right in the center of Chicopee. He stated he like the concept but there are a lot of unanswered questions here.

Councilor Zygarowski stated that after the three years the city will pay.

Councilor Brooks stated yes or grants.

Councilor Zygarowski stated that he would not like to see the Community Health Center in the business district in Chicopee Center. He stated that he has concerns of Police safety; we don't have enough officers now to walk the beat downtown. He stated he is not in favor of the Chicopee Center Library for the Health Center. He stated that he is keeping an open mind and likes the concept.

Councilor Labrie stated that he agrees that something has to be done. He stated that he doesn't think we will save one hundred percent of Police response in Chicopee Center because a lot of the people don't want the help. He stated that the Library is a long way away from where most of the homeless are. He stated how are we going to get them there. He stated that the Lyman Mills building is vacant maybe it's something we can look into. He stated he has been getting calls in his ward that people have been sleeping in the Aldenville playground, the cemetery and along the banks of the river. He stated that he doesn't know if the Police can remove them if they are sleeping on benches. He stated that this is a great first step because we don't want it to get worse than what it is.

Councilor Tillotson stated that this is a real grandiose plan. He doesn't know if the Mayor will want to start with that kind of a cost or move into something more quietly without such a big expense. He stated there are so many things we need in order to use this money. He stated we are going to have to spend a lot of money re-modernizing our sewer and water system. He is trying to look at what

will benefit the entire city. He stated he agrees it does not belong in the Library. We are trying to attract new business and he's not sure what the environment will be. He stated that we are doing quite a bit here in the city with, Lorraine's Soup Kitchen and the Food Bank at the Golf Course, **Councilor Tillotson** stated that he has concerns about homeless coming to Chicopee from Holyoke or other communities.

Councilor Laflamme stated he thinks the members here tonight should review this as soon as possible and give your thoughts to the Mayor.

Councilor Brooks stated that the Federal Government hasn't decided what the assentation process should be on how you spend the money.

Councilor Krampits stated looking at rental property to start off might be the way to go to see how successful this program is going to be versus investing money into the old Library.

Councilor Zygarowski asked what the hours would be in the Community Health Center.

Councilor Brooks stated the engagement window will be between 11:00 AM and 7:00 PM.

Councilor Dobosz was concerned this will attract homeless from other communities. He stated helping with housing would be huge but he is not sure if offering showers is the right approach. He stated if the businesses weren't happy with the bike loop how will they feel with this in the center of town. He stated he would be more supportive if this qualifies for any grant funding.

Councilor Walczak stated that this is along the same line as we offer the senior services. We have to look at it as a starting point and let's see what we can do to make the city better. He stated that we are not happy with people being homeless on the street so I think we can do something similar to the Senior Center. He asked if they consider Chicopee Plaza down on Main Street. He stated he is in favor of this.

Councilor Laflamme motion to send to the Mayor for pursuit of ARPA funding for the creation of a community based center for his review – Councilor Brooks 2nd the motion – motion passed

Committee vote 6 – 0 favorable

ITEM #3

Councilor Laflamme motion to approve the minutes of June 17, 2021 – Councilor Brooks 2nd the motion – motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM

Chicopee Community Health Center

9/8/21



Chicopee's demographics

- In 2020 the poverty rate in Chicopee was 16.4% affecting roughly 9184 people
<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/chicopee-ma/>
- As of January 2020, Massachusetts had an estimated **17,975** experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Of that Total, **3,714** were family households, **836** were Veterans, **481** were unaccompanied young adults (aged 18-24), and **2,042** were individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.
<https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/ma/>
- The percentage of chronically homeless people in Chicopee is 5% or 2500 individuals and families
<https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/ma/>

City of Chicopee Federal Covid recovery funds

- 38 million dollars over the next three years
- Federal regulations allow for the creation of community based health centers offering a variety of services
- ARPA funding can be specifically used for the support public health expenditures and to address the negative economic impacts related to homelessness and food insecurity caused by the public health emergency.

<https://data-resources/american-rescue-plan-act-cities#funds>

Location

- THE VACANT LIBRARY BUILDING LOCATED AT 31 CENTER STREET Chicopee provides a city controlled underutilized asset that will benefit the community
- Alternative site located at 148/152 Center St. \$16.00 per square per year triple net lease of \$56k plus utilities annually
- Both have the capacity to allow for laundry and sanitary facilities to promote health and well being
- Library requires one time retrofitting and code compliance costs associated with the creation of the facility roughly \$500,000
- Install an exterior stair lift \$5000 @library
- According to the US National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, providing permanent supportive housing and healthcare access to the homeless community saves the taxpayer money: **Healthcare costs are reduced by 59% Emergency department costs are decreased by 61% The number of general inpatient hospitalizations is decreased by 77%**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> >

Reoccurring Staffing and Related expenses

Staffing

- Clinic director \$110-\$120 annually, RN
- Outreach Coordinator \$75 annual BA level staff
- FT admin \$40 annually

Annual Facility Costs

- Utilities and upkeep 155K per year
- Insurance and liability \$80K
- Total operational yearly costs \$500,000

FY 22 Budget \$214 million, operational costs of community based health center representative of .23% of the total annual operating budget

Services provided

Healthcare triage and examinations

- Nursing treatments
- Recommendations for care PCP, ER, urgent care treatment
- Ongoing nursing assessments as needed



Services provided cont

Medication Management

- Pill box management
- Reconciliation of medications in collaboration with Health Care Practitioners
- Education services related to appropriate use and side effects

Healthcare high risk services

- Blood pressure management, hypertension/obesity
- Diabetes and blood sugar management & education
- Nutritional consults
- Continued education related to COVID 19 and Current CDC guidelines

Services provided cont

Case Coordination and Screening for:

- Demographics
- Medical/insurance info
- Current needs assessments
- Referral services based on acuity of risk
- Identify the self determinants of health



Services provided cont

Referrals for Pandemic resources:

- Food banks
- Access to PPE
- Unemployment guidance and assistance
- Testing and vaccination
- Housing: rights, emergency housing, evictions and assistance, [mass.gov/covid/housing help](https://mass.gov/covid/housing-help) or 2-1-1) General referrals: - housing
- Low income housing and section 8 support
- Raft - The **RAFT program** helps keep households in stable housing situations when facing eviction, foreclosure, loss of utilities, and other housing emergencies
- Housing financial assistance/ shelter access
- Private rent- apartment search
- Mental health for individuals, families and children

Services provided cont

Clothing and house essentials: (donations from the community) available at the location

- Job Assistance:
- Referrals education or getting ready for workforce
- Education on how to prepare a resume/ cover letter
- Job fair guidance and support
- Online application drop in station to prepare for job interviews
- Seasonal jobs search
- Liaison to staffing agencies
- Education
- GED/ high school diploma assistance/ referrals
- College guidance/ assistance
- Support for children on after-school programs, tutoring

Conclusion

- The creation of a community based healthcare center will address the most vulnerable and underserved members in our community
- Proven link between the decrease in homelessness and access to healthcare improves and strengthens business growth and development in urban areas
- The value of a community based health center will promote health and well being for residents for years to come

Questions???